# Theory of Shankarā's Pure Monism (Kevalādvaita) and Vallabhā's Shuddhādvaita

## Preface:

Taitariya Upanishad, while defining the essential nature of the Supreme Being (Brahman) as - सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म (तैत्ति. उप. 2|1) – "The second-less Complex Homogeneous Blissful Infinite Conscious Being" states indirectly various essential qualities of that Brahman (Of being real, being conscious and being limitless). Although, Brahman is described as having divine forms, qualities and characteristics with respect to its creation, there are several Interesting Vedic Interpretations existing about this Shruti. As per some interpretations, Brahman is formless, without any qualities, and without any specific essential characteristics – निर्धर्मक, निर्विशेष, निराकार and निर्गुण. While, some interprets Brahman having divine (अप्राकृत, दिव्य) forms, qualities and essential characteristics. Similarly, multiple contradictory Vedic interpretations exist regarding the essential nature of the Universe and thus the nature of multiplicities. There are several permutations possible regarding the nature of the Unity and the Multiplicities with respect to it being Formless/Divine Form, Qualitative/Non-Qualitative, Functional/Non-Functional and realistic/non-realistic/phenomenal respectively.

## Kevalādvaita's Stand:

One such interpretation as per the theory proposed by Bhagwad-Pād Shri Ādi Shankarāchārya and his tradition which is popularly known as "Māyāvād" or "Kevalādvaitavād" takes a very unique stand. Due to the possibility of not being able to retain Brahman's Eternity, Brahman was regarded as having no potency of creating/sustaining/dissolving the multiplicities within it. If accepted otherwise, Brahman's Eternity would be in question. Due to this fear, "Māyāvād" takes a unique stand of concluding all the multiplicities as phenomenal/Illusionary while Brahman being unable to bear any of the divine qualities/forms/characteristics. Thus, the Unity is absolutely In-tolerant towards Multiplicities and vice-versa in the theory of "Kevalādvaitavād". The discussion can very well be summarized by referring to the statement made regarding the type of Non-Duality/Unity accepted in this theory by a popular proponent and scholar of "Kevalādvaitavād" – Vāchaspati Misra as "अभेदं इति न तादात्म्यं ब्रूमः किन्तु भेदं व्यासेधाम" - "*The Non-Duality in our theory is NOT accepted as Identity But rather it is to deny the Multiplicities"* – This clearly makes it clear that "Kevalādvaitavād" Theory is not ready to believe Brahman as "सत्यं" but rather want to believe it as NOT "असत्यं", not as "ज्ञानं" but rather as NOT "अज्ञानं" and finally not as "अनन्तं" but rather as NOT "सान्तं". It can be diagrammatically viewed as below –

It is very interesting to note as to how far the meaning of the Shrutis and Vyāsa's Brahmasutrās has to be twisted to prove that Brahman is indeed full with negative qualities and is susceptible to its own reflection due the nescience. It should be noted that although the theory is strong proponent of Absolute non-duality it still has to indirectly believe in the absolute duality between nescience and Brahman, between the negative qualities of Brahman and of course the very concepts of Vyavahārika, and Prātibhāsika dualities. Thus, even a pure monistic theory needs the help of absolute duality!!

## Shuddhādvaita's Stand:

In the pure contrast to the above stand, the theory of Substantial Identity under the broad framework of proposed Shuddhā-advaita by Purushottam Vaishvānarāvatār Sri Vallabhāchārya accepts the literal meaning of the above textual passage along with consistent and harmonious interpretations between various different types of scriptures and concludes that Brahman in fact is full of Limitless divine forms, qualities and characteristics. Sri Vallabhāchārya argues against Sri Shankarāchārya's Stand of negative qualities by giving a logical pitfall.

Let A = असत्यं, B = अज्ञानं and C = सान्तं be 3 different negative qualities

As per Vāchaspati Misra, the equation can be written as -

Brahman = ~ A + ~B + ~C ≡ (B+C) + (C+A) + (A+B)

Thus, even if the attributes are accepted in negative terms, there still remains the logical justification pending as to how can the dualities that still come before us in the common locus of Brahman with 3 different possibilities of ~A, ~B and ~C be justified? And if 3 different loci of these attributes are considered then again we will encounter another type of multiplicity of having different loci. There are lots of other logical pitfalls as well in accepting Māyāvād which is out of the scope of this article.

Sri Vallabhāchārya's stand is Brahman's eternity is not compromised by multiplicities since there is a relation of Identity between Brahman and the Universe and thus actually there is NO In-tolerance between Brahman's Unities with Universal Multiplicities. Brahman becomes the substantial and the efficient cause of the Universe without losing its eternity. The examples quoted in the scriptures are also given to emphasize on this fact i.e. Gold-Ornament, clay-pot etc. Just as in these examples, the cause do not get degenerated when transformed into the effect, so is with the Brahman when it gets transformed into the Universal Multiplicities due to his own desire to relish his own self (Lila). Thus, in Shuddha-advaita, all the dualities (functional, formal and qualitative) are considered real and generated out of the Supreme Being's desire to perform that divine play (लोकवत् तु

लीला कैवल्यम् - Brahmasutra) while maintaining substantial identity all the time. The below diagram represents the above theory -

As we can see in above diagram, Shuddhā-advaita takes the stand of Positive Qualities of Brahman and its omnipotence as the reason to tolerate multiplicities within singularity (भेदसहिष्णु अभेद). The commitment of this can be very well be noted when Sri Vallabhāchārya proclaims below in his excellent commentary on Srimad-Bhāgawatam – "अन्वपि ब्रह्म व्यापकं भवति कृष्णः यशोदा क्रोडे स्थितोऽपि सकल जगदाधरो भवति" (सुबोधिनी). Below Truth-table gives an insight to both of these theories along with the stand taken by Bhagwad-Pād Sri Rāmānujāchārya's Vishishtādvaitavād.

Let *A=Singularity (अद्वैत) and B=Multiplicity (द्वैत)*

| *Truth Table* | | केवलाद्वैत (मायावाद - शाङ्कर मत) | विशिष्टाद्वैत (रामानुज मत) | शुद्धाद्वैत (वाल्लभ मत) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *A* | *B* | *A = ~B* | $A = \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} C_j + \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} D_k$ $C_j \neq C_{j+1}, D_k \neq D_{k+1}$ , $C_j \neq D_k$ *C = चिद् and D = अचित्* | *A=B or A=~ [~B]* |
| *T* | *T* | *F* | | *T* |
| *T* | *F* | *T* | | *F* |
| *F* | *T* | *T* | | *F* |
| *F* | *F* | *F* | | *T* |
| | | *Boolean XOR* | | *Boolean XNOR* |

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*References:*

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